

# A HISTORY OF MODERN LIBERTY.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE RENASCENCE AND THE EMANCIPATION OF THE INTELLECT.

RENASCENCE is the general term applied to the quickened intellectual activity which, from about the close of the Middle Ages, manifested itself in the whole sphere of man's spiritual life — in learning and literature, in art and science, in discovery and invention, in politics, law, and religion. In one sense it was a rebirth — the rebirth of an intellectual life which the fall of the Roman Empire had stifled, and which had inspired the philosophers, the poets, the historians, the artists of classic antiquity. In another sense it was an emancipation from the bonds of the feudal age which had been dominated by a certain system in church, school, state, society. This emancipation process began long before the dawn of the Renaissance Period proper, was, in fact, as far as these remote beginnings are concerned, independent of the later revival of the fifteenth century. It took a political and social direction. To the universal dominion claimed by the emperor it opposed the incipient nationalist tendency which finally resulted in the establishment of distinct and powerful nations, in place of the one mediaeval empire which had at best been but a fiction. As against the pope it championed the right of both emperor and king, and paved the way for the establishment of national churches in place of the universal Roman Church. As against the hier-